

January 2002 begins a new tradition: *National Mentoring Month*

By Tom Pennella, Mentoring Program Manager,
Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Beginning in January 2002, a coalition of nonprofit organizations including America's Promise, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and others will team up with leading communications companies to create a concentrated burst of national and local media activity and community outreach known as "National Mentoring Month."

Mentoring continues to gain momentum across the nation and Washington State, and can greatly benefit from state employees' involvement.

In the weeks since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, we as a nation have stepped back and rethought our roles and responsibilities as American citizens. While there is a heightened sense of fear for the future, there is also a palpable desire on the part of many people to get involved and provide young people with role models and reliable, sustained relationships outside their families.

Mentoring has been shown to improve school performance and prevent illicit drug use, underage drinking, and violence among young people.

Mentoring takes various forms,

but all types of mentoring supports the DSHS mission of improving the quality of life for individuals and families in need.

I have experienced firsthand the impact a mentor can have in an individual's life, and

there is nothing like it for both the youth and the adult mentor.

It is not just young people and adult mentors who benefit from mentoring. Entire communities benefit from knowing that their young people are on the right track to a successful future.

National Mentoring Month addresses the important need for bringing a mentoring opportunity to an estimated 16 million young people in the U.S. who could benefit greatly from a mentor. The specific goals of the campaign are to: (1) raise awareness of mentoring in its various forms; (2) recruit caring adults to become mentors, especially for programs with waiting lists of young people; and (3) promote rapid growth of mentoring by encouraging organizations to recruit their constituents.

National and local media outlets in 26 states will deliver powerful, month-long messages such as "Make a Difference," "Mentor a Child," and "Who Mentored You? Pass it on!" In addition, a United States postage stamp is being issued this January in recognition of National Mentoring Month.

To find out more about mentoring and possible opportunities in your area, please call 1-888-432-MENTOR, visit the National Mentoring Partnership Web site at www.mentoring.org, or contact Tom Pennella, DSHS/DASA Mentoring Program Manager, at (360) 438-8494.



Inside

Secretary Braddock explains
purpose of new State Advisory
Committee.....2

Janice Langbehn takes her
commitment to children home.....5

Employee Recognition Program
is revitalized; nominations are due.....5

Congratulations! Staff are updating phone messages

The November 2001 DSHS telephone answering survey showed a significant improvement in the agency's response to telephone calls. More than 80 percent of the calls to DSHS employees were either answered by a real person or by a voice mail message with all required current information.

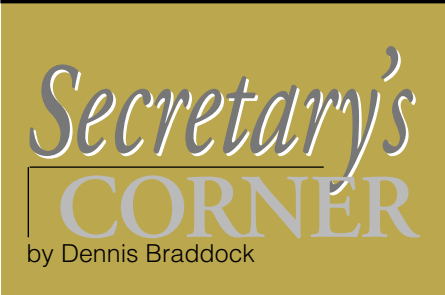
Secretary Dennis Braddock congratulated DSHS staff for reaching the goal of improving the response to telephone calls. He said, "Our staff put a lot of efforts to better serve our customers by telephone. They made a big difference for people who need our help. I appreciate that."

This rate of correctly answered phone calls, 80 percent, represents a dramatic increase over the previous surveys where the correct response rates ranged from 58 percent in June 2000, 70 percent in December 2000, to 73 percent in March 2001.

On the November survey, 20 percent of the calls did not receive correct responses. Half of the incorrect responses were due to the voice mail messages that did not contain all the required information: current date, times available and directions to reach a real person. In the other half, the directions to reach a real person lead to a busy signal, no answer, or a person who was not able to provide needed information about the original call recipient.

"Although this survey shows the *Keep It Current* campaign to be a success," Secretary Braddock added, "I encourage our staff to continue providing current and informative responses to telephone calls, and I want to thank everyone who makes the effort in doing that."

Keep It Current reminder cards were distributed to all staff in August. If you have lost your card, check with your administrative support for a new card. If your office supply has been exhausted, additional cards can be ordered from the DSHS Forms and Publications Warehouse. You may e-mail your request to dshsfpw@dshs.wa.gov or fax your request to (360) 664-0597, or send your order to P.O. Box 45816, Olympia WA 98504-5816. Ask for Publications Number DSHS 22-531(X). Be sure to provide your address. Your order must be in writing. Please do not call the warehouse.



Many of our programs have advisory groups that provide good, helpful advice on a regular basis. We need and value their advice. We also need the advice of people who come from

other walks of life – people who are leaders who don't normally come in contact with DSHS or our various constituencies, but who care about our state and see us in a greater social, economic and political context.

In order to hear from such people, I recently formed a new State Advisory Committee to advise me and my management team on long-term strategies to improve our service integration within DSHS, and our integration with communities across the state.

I am very pleased that an outstanding group of 18 people from throughout the state has agreed to share their expertise and perspectives. They are geographically, culturally, politically and professionally diverse. These members represent private and public corporations, foundations, higher education, K-12 education, city, county and state governments, health care, and American Indian tribes. Former DSHS Deputy Secretary Charley Reed is also a member. (For a list of members, plus brief biographies refer to the Secretary's News Intranet page at <http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/SecretarysNews/>)

All these leaders have spent years concerned about the health of our society and about strengthening our social services system at all levels.

We held our first meeting on Nov. 29. The State Advisory Committee members were very interested in further exploring the challenges that the department faces - issues as acute as adjusting to the state's declining revenue and as far-reaching to our society as giving clients more personal choice in where they live and from whom they receive care.

We received some excellent insights at the first meeting regarding the necessity of engaging diverse community organizations, and also candid observations of how to overcome deficiencies in our methods of engaging these groups.

This impressive group of civic and business leaders has generously agreed to meet approximately three times a year to offer insights and advice on long-term strategies for improving our community and business partnerships to meet the needs of clients in these challenging times.

In addition, we will take advantage of technology to exchange information and ideas on a timely basis between the scheduled committee meetings.

We are fortunate that these leaders will take the time from their busy lives and schedules to get to know us and our work, and to offer their varied perspectives on how we can better serve the people of Washington.

Editor's note: Region 3 Aging and Adult Services' Home & Community Services office received an Adult Protective Services (APS) call about an elderly couple who were physically assaulted by one of their daughters. The alleged assaulting daughter beat up her mother and was taken to jail on assault charges.

Gary Bright, APS worker, immediately went to the hospital where he was able to assist in placing this couple in a skilled nursing facility for rehabilitation and observation. Bright worked with law enforcement to obtain a Protective Order against the alleged abusive daughter. The allegedly assaulting daughter has apparently victimized the parents for years.

The couple's other daughter was amazed at how fast APS was able to resolve the problem and protect the victims; below is her letter to Bright's supervisor:

While more work remains to be done, the department has made important progress during the past year to protect vulnerable people and to reduce tort losses.

That is the assessment of DSHS Secretary Dennis Braddock, looking back on the first year's results since he joined the department and made improved protection for vulnerable people and improved risk management strategies top priorities for DSHS.

"DSHS and its employees always will have to make tough decisions in difficult circumstances. Tough decisions go with the job," Secretary Braddock said. "But I've made it a top priority to do all we can to keep our clients from being harmed by our decisions, and our emphasis is paying off for the public. We won't let up now; we have much more to do."

In calendar year 2001, DSHS achieved several milestones:

- Launched a new campaign, in conjunction with many community partners, making it much easier for the public to report suspicions of abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults. A cornerstone of the campaign was the collaboration of DSHS child and adult protection programs to create a shortcut through the normal abuse and neglect reporting systems so that anyone, anywhere in the state, can place a single toll-free call (1-866-ENDHARM) and be routed to the correct local DSHS office.

"I want to offer some feedback about Gary Bright and your organization. I called Adult Protective Services Monday immediately after my mother called to tell me my sister had assaulted my parents Saturday night....

I was amazed and relieved that when I called my parents the next day, Gary was already there. I talked with him then and many times since. He has done wonders! I am trying to help my parents at a distance, as I live in Oregon and am recuperating from bacterial pneumonia....

Gary has, with the help of the police and fire department, moved my parents to a safe location and has spent a lot of time with them. They are in good spirits and feel safe because of Gary's efforts. He

has also gotten them to consider options that they have not considered in the past. I am very favorably impressed with your organization and Gary's work. Words cannot express my gratitude. Thanks to Gary, I can sleep at night, something that was not possible for me that first night.

Not only has Gary done very good work with my parents, but also he has gone beyond just doing a job. He has been unfailingly kind and helpful, and has called on his cell phone after hours to give me information. He has gained my parents' confidence and made them feel much better.

I am very grateful for your organization and for Gary Bright. He is a godsend."

— Name withheld

Department makes progress made in 2001 to protect the vulnerable and reduce tort losses

- With support from Governor Gary Locke, won legislative approval of the DSHS "Kids Come First Action Agenda," which:

- Maps out a comprehensive strategy to improve the state's child welfare system.

- Implements changes in the day-to-day operations that support the goal of the safety of children whose care is supervised by DSHS.

- Requires a more structured review by agency managers before children at risk of abuse or neglect can be returned home.

- Improves oversight of children in out-of-home care.

- Engages communities and partners in keeping children safe from abuse and neglect.

- Establishes a new principle of Child Protective Services, clarifying for social workers that safety of the child takes top priority over other goals related to children and their families.

- In cooperation with the state Attorney General, placed additional emphasis on protecting taxpayer dollars against tort claims.

While the full results of these efforts won't be known for several years, Secretary Braddock is encouraged by one immediate measure of results - DSHS's improved record in tort verdicts and settlements during calendar year 2001.

During the year, the department has lost only one tort lawsuit at trial. That single verdict for the plaintiff was a Child Protective Services matter in

which a Snohomish County jury found the department liable for damages of \$29,500. The plaintiff had sought \$300,000.

In addition, a total of 55 tort cases were settled out of court in 2001, all on terms favorable to all parties - to the state, the taxpayers, and the plaintiffs who brought the claims. The settlements also avoided costly trials.

DSHS has paid approximately \$17 million in tort claims in 2001 - down from the high of \$58 million paid in calendar year 2000.

Of the \$17 million total this year, the largest component was a \$7.5 million settlement to 12 men who alleged they were mistreated 15 to 20 years ago at the O. K. Boys Ranch, a group home that was operated by a non-profit service club.

Washington is one of only six states in the nation with no sovereign immunity from civil suits for public agencies in the conduct of their missions. Also under Washington law, if the state is found to have been even one percent responsible for a harmful outcome, it can be required to pay 100 percent of the damages. These two statutory mandates expose the state and its taxpayers to large damage awards.

For more information about these cases, or about Washington's tort litigation environment, contact Bernie Friedman, J.D., at (360) 902-7860. Friedman is special assistant to the DSHS Secretary for Loss Prevention and Risk Management.



Sharing our successes and commitment to reaching beyond the expected to the excellent

Quality DSHS

Eight teams improve services through the quality approach

This month we share with you the successes of eight DSHS quality teams featured in the most recent Blue Book published by the Governor's Office. Using quality principles and approaches, they are making a difference in improving how we deliver services to our clients across the state.

TAKING THE "EMERGENCY" OUT OF EMERGENCY APS PLACEMENTS

Finding placements for vulnerable adults needing immediate residential care was a time-consuming process for Adult Protective Services (APS) staff. Phoning long lists of caregivers to locate vacancies in appropriate facilities took time and focus away from client services. To address this problem, the team made advance arrangements with supportive services and a range of facilities willing to accept short-term emergency placements.

Results

- Skilled nursing facilities located in the north, south, east and west sections of King County agreed to accept emergency APS clients.
- One enhanced residential care facility agreed to accept emergency APS placements.
- Three adult family homes agreed to accept emergency APS placements.
- Identified transportation, medical assessment, and emergency funds to meet emergency needs.
- Improved services to vulnerable adults, reduced stress and frustration for APS staff, and enhanced cooperation with care providers.
- Increased mutual understanding of APS procedures and services among providers and APS staff recognition of providers' strengths and concerns.

Team members: Kathleen Burge and Dick Goard

DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT STREAMLINES STORAGE OF CASE FILES

Until recently, the Division of Child Support was printing, disbursing, filing forms, and storing them in case records as paper file copies. This resulted in several problems, including: employee handling time associated with distributing, filing and then purging old copies as updated forms were generated, and amount of storage space needed to store paper file copies.

To remedy these issues, employees at the Division of Child Support identified 16 highly used forms for file copy eliminating the need to print, manually distribute, file, and retain paper copies of these forms in case records. Now an estimated 70,000 pages of these forms each month are no longer being stored in case files.

Results

- Eliminates need to print, manually distribute, file, purge and then recycle paper copies.
- Saves filing storage space.
- Saves natural resources.

Team Members: Debra McEldery, Michelle David, Solveig Tripp, Rhonda Opoka, Richard Libbey, Brian List, Dawn DeLong, Vicki Cates

DATA MATCH IMPROVEMENT TEAM EFFORTS RESULT IN SAVINGS

The federal government requires Medical Assistance to do a data match with employers and identify third party insurance. The Automated Client Eligibility System was used to look for possible matches.

With the old system, every quarter employers were mailed a cumbersome form at an approximate cost of \$19,720 per year. As a result of this mailing, staff spent an average of 480 hours per year on the phone

responding to employer inquiries and complaints at an approximate cost of \$4,704.

The team developed a new more user friendly form. The forms were more self-explanatory and mailed only when there was a change in circumstances from the previous quarter. Forms printed each quarter dropped from 58,000 to approximately 6,500 at a mail savings of approximately \$17,565 per year.

Results

- The old form required 483.32 hours per year to prepare and mail, at an average salary cost of \$4,833 per year. The new form used 52.8 hours per year to prepare and mail, at a salary cost of \$528.08 per year with a savings of 89 percent in salary cost.
- Postage costs for the old form were \$78,880 per year, with the new form the costs of postage are \$8,618 per year, a savings of 89 percent.
- Using the new form employers calling in with questions or complaints has dropped from 1,328 per quarter to 486, with a savings in staff time of \$3,615.36 and a presumed improvement in customer satisfaction.

Team members: William F. Koepp (team coach), Roger Malmberg, Judy Miller, Mary Benton, Debbie Koepp, Michael Haynes, Joyce Moses, Mark Benya, Jack Rantalla, Sharla Metheny, Michele Hergert, Andy Renggli (team sponsor)

INNOVATIVE TRAINING IMPROVES CLIENT SERVICES AND STAFF MORALE

Financial staff and managers expressed a desire for ongoing financial eligibility training to be conducted by Home and Community Services (HCS). While formal training is provided, staff expressed the need for additional training opportunities. This training was to include eligibility, program changes, Food Stamp Basic Training and Financial/Medical CORE Training.

Monthly, all-financial staff training present eligibility material, changes in eligibility or policy, and program enhancements. The team updated the Food Assistance Learning Guide to present Food Stamp Basic Training for a long-term care population and eligibility rules. They also designed the Long-Term Care Financial/Medical CORE Training curriculum and training modules.

Results

- Maintained a food stamp 100 percent accuracy rate for fiscal year 2000 at Region 4 Home and Community Services.
- Greatly improved customer service. Financial services are consistently and reliably provided.
- Savings of \$14,500 resulted with this effort.
- Increased employee satisfaction and morale as management has responded to the desire for training and employee needs are being met.
- Increased customer service with staff's program knowledge increasing as well as their understanding of their job as a whole.

Team members: Peggy Rezac, Judith Finn, Jerald Ulrich

FASTER FINANCIAL SERVICES HELP VULNERABLE ADULTS

Federal guidelines require that medical/long-term care financial applications be processed within 45 days. The Pasco Home and Community Services office completed 73 percent of the applications within this required timeframe. This means that 27 percent of clients who submitted applications waited longer than 45 days for notification of their eligibility. Applicants, many who are severely ill and disabled, went without needed services, Medicaid coupons, and long-term care.

A team of clerical, financial, and social services staff developed delay-points within the application process. Steps were identified for clerical, financial, and social services to reduce the delays. Improved communication methods and tools were developed and implemented.

Using quality principles continues to result in better services

(Continued from page 3)

Results

- Increased "On-time applications" by 23 percent from 73 percent to 96 percent.
- Savings of 188 hours annually means less time is spent on client/provider phone calls and more time available to process applications quickly.
- Improved communication between clerical, financial and social services saved time to improve response times.
- Improved client services in that eligibility determination is faster, needed long-term care services can be arranged, and clients' health and safety are maintained and enhanced.
- Fewer phone calls are required to complete the application. This time is used to process applications quickly.

Team members: Karen Lindberg, Sharon Anderson, Diane Storms, Judi Jeffreys, Sherrie Michael, Esmeralda Luksic, Sande Nielsen, Annie Vasquez

PLACING VENDOR INFORMATION ONLINE SAVES THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

DSHS employees who process vendor bills rely on the information in the Vendor Book or the Agency Financial Reporting System (AFRS) when they process the bills. The Vendor Book was costly and outdated. Updated vendor information was only posted in AFRS. To be able to access AFRS, it costs \$300 to hook up each computer with the main-frame system. After that, every time the users access AFRS system, a mainframe usage fee is charged.

A team consisting of staff from three offices found a solution. In the TRACKS E-Purchasing system, a link called Vendor Look-up was created with a pop-up window of vendor information. This link can be used by all authorized employees from their personal computers with no cost. This online Vendor look-up saved thousands of dollars in mainframe costs, increased information access and accuracy, and reduced process time.

Results


- Reduced on-going mainframe usage costs for approximately 1,000 users. Estimate savings: \$75,000 a year.
- Avoided additional mainframe hook-up fees: \$300 per computer. Estimate savings: \$22,500 - one-time savings.
- Increased vendor information access and accuracy.
- Reduced process time for paying bills from the vendors.
- Avoided late payments due to incorrect vendor information.

Team members: Steve Hulbert, Celina Verme, Ken Moses, Jay Treat, Kim Hewitt, Matthew Mattlock, Wanda Emmick, Lynn Graham-Hoey, Diane deLeon, James Briggs, Teresa Sapp, Rena Patch, Toby Mottman, Janice Huntley, Judi Rogers

DSHS ENERGY TRACKING SYSTEM ALLOWS AGENCY TO CONTROL COSTS

Recent energy shortages and rising utility costs have prompted the state to look for ways to conserve energy and control rising costs. The department operates 220 facilities across the state, representing nine million square feet of property, and an annual utility cost of \$7,820,000. Because peoples' lives hang in the balance of the budget, the DSHS Lands and Buildings Division partnered with the Budget Division's LAN/Open Systems Group to develop a Web-based, departmentwide Energy Tracking System that collects information from state utility companies, compares baseline information, reports energy and thermal usage, generates reports for General Administration, and allows the agency to control costs.

The enhanced quality and accessibility of the monitoring system, along with the heightened awareness and emphasis it places on tracking and auditing results, produces parallel energy cost savings throughout the agency.



Sharing our successes and commitment to reaching beyond the expected to the excellent

Each of the eight administrations has steering committees to assist in leading the department's efforts to continue providing quality services to the residents of the state of Washington. For more information on the quality improvement activities occurring throughout the department, contact Alice Liou, internal quality consultant, at (360) 902-7783 or e-mail at LiouAH@dshs.wa.gov@dshs.wa.gov

Results

- Reduced 75 percent of staff time (8,936 hours a year) in handling paperwork. Web-based data entry and reporting is easily accessible and maintainable by DSHS energy coordinators, avoiding needless paper-work shuffles and time-consuming transmittal.
- The effectiveness of the Energy Tracking System enabled the successful implementation of the DSHS energy conservation plan. As a result, DSHS is able to reduce energy and thermal costs from \$7,820,000 to \$6,820,000 per year.
- Reduced report process time from days to minutes. Reports now can be transmitted to General Administration within a matter of minutes.
- Using the Tracking System, targeted steps can be taken to curtail energy consumption and rising costs. Trends can be identified that will allow the agency to identify savings in the years to come.
- Other agencies are considering adopting the DSHS Energy Tracking System to monitor and control their utility costs as well.

Team members: John Moody, Brad Carlson, Victor Alcantara, Allen Smith, Dave Carrell and Debbie Armstrong

COMPETITIVE BIDDING TO PRINT FORMS SAVES MONEY

DSHS Forms and Records Management Services (FRMS) designs, develops and maintains thousands of forms for DSHS programs. Prior to 1995, FRMS had always used the State Printers and Copy Centers for all printing needs. In 1995, FRMS learned that the Correctional Industries (CI) Print Shop in Monroe was able to provide printing services at a lower rate. The facility is a fully functional, state-of-the-art printing facility. The consensus was to test sample the printing services.

After using CI for several months, the cost analysis on the print jobs that have 500 to 10,000 prints indicated a savings of 25 percent or more on each job completed.

This information provided an incentive for executing a bid process between the State Printer and CI for large printing orders containing 10,000 prints or more.

The agency that could meet the turnaround time and had the best rate would receive the order. This new process resulted in a \$145,641 savings from large orders as of June 2001. An average of 25 percent cost reduction in small orders from 1995 to present has also resulted in an additional \$116,148 savings.

Results

- In the last five years, this process has saved DSHS \$261,789 in printing and shipping costs. These dollars remain with the programs and help improve service to clients.
- Improved customer service between FRMS and DSHS programs.
- Improved the team awareness of potential cost savings they were capable of achieving for the agency.
- Enhanced the competency of the Forms Consultants to become more effective in resource management, which also assisted in accelerating their process improvement to achieve department business goals.

Team members: Toni Benham and Tri Howard. Honorable mentions to Millie Brombacher and Kat Ostergard

Diversity Calendar

Each month *The NewsConnection* features special dates, provided by the Division of Access and Equal Opportunity. If you have a special date you would like included in the next calendar, e-mail Patte King at Kingpl@dshs.wa.gov. Not all dates can be included due to length constraints.

JANUARY

1	New Year's Day
	U.S. African-American Emancipation Day
4	Isaac Newton's Birthday
5	George Washington Carver's Birthday
13	Togo: Liberation Day
15	Martin Luther King's Birthday
17	Benjamin Franklin's Birthday
20	Brazil: San Sebastian's Day
21	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
26	New Zealand: Auckland Day
26	India: Republic Day
30	Jackie Robinson's Birthday
31	13th Amendment Abolishes Slavery

FEBRUARY

NATIONAL AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

3	Elizabeth Blackwell's Birthday
5	Mexico: Constitution Day
6	New Zealand: Waitangi Day
8	Philippines: Constitution Day
11	Lithuania: Independence Day
12	President Lincoln's Birthday
	Chinese New Year
13	Christian: Ash Wednesday
14	Valentine's Day
18	Chief Leschi Day
19	US: President's Day
	National Day of Remembrance: Japanese American Internment
22	Washington's Birthday

Janice Langbehn takes her commitment to children home

Many in DSHS are parents. Think of those days when you are so frustrated, your child is acting out and the school is calling for a meeting. It all seems so overwhelming.

Many in DSHS work directly with children whose lives have been loaded with challenges from birth due to their parent's substance abuse or physical or emotional abuse. Social workers struggle each day to find just the right person and place where these children can grow and flourish.

For one DSHS employee, this task is not just a professional responsibility but a personal decision. She and her partner have opened their hearts and home to four very special children.

Janice Langbehn is a supervisor with the Division of Children and Family Services in Centralia. She and her partner, Lisa Pond, have adopted two sibling sets, three of which are termed "special needs."

Langbehn began her journey to motherhood working with people with developmental disabilities while in college. "Lisa and I knew from working in this field how important it is to raise these kids in a family environment, and that's what started us out."

They became foster parents in 1992. Their first foster child was 14 and had "bounced around all over the system, never staying in a placement longer than 19 months," said Langbehn. "We were just 22 and she was 14! We knew we didn't want any other children at that time because her needs were so great."

While other families had found the young girl's behavior problems too much, Langbehn and Pond

never considered having her moved to a different foster home. They worked to provide a "normal as possible teenage experience."

While she still has many problems, Langbehn said, "At least we know for the four and half years she was with us she was safe." She has since moved out on her own.

They began their adopted family with Michael who they took in as a foster child at six years of age. His mom was a known cocaine user. At birth he was not breathing and suffered from oxygen deprivation. His was in several foster homes and was highlighted in the *Seattle Times* in an attempt to find a home that could meet his needs. Many families from as far away as Michigan were interested, but after spending time with Michael found his needs to be too great.

Langbehn and Pond saw a picture of Michael as a child waiting for adoption and contacted the worker.

After a lengthy transition, he moved in to his "forever home" and his adoption was finalized six months later. He is now 11. His diagnosis includes mental health issues, moderate mental retardation, plus attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

To most people, parenting Michael would be enough of a challenge. But Langbehn and Pond continued to be foster parents and another child came into their home, David. David's mother was a cocaine addict, a prostitute in late-stage AIDS, and had received no prenatal care.

David had been sick since birth and never smiled, according to

Langbehn. He had been in two previous foster homes and his last foster parents said he was "just too sick" and asked the social worker to find him a new home.

"When I met him for the first time he was so sick and had a temperature of 103 degrees," said Langbehn. "When I picked him up he didn't cry and he clung to me. I called Lisa and said we're keeping him." He was just 19 months old. His adoption was finalized just before his third birthday. David is now six.

David's biological mother had another child, Katie, while incarcerated. While in jail, the mother received prenatal care and treatment for her AIDS. Katie was born "clean" and healthy. Langbehn said Katie has high intelligence and "she's amazing." Katie was placed into their home at 28 days, adopted at one and a half, and is now four. Both Katie and David face continuing concerns about their exposure to AIDS but are followed by Children's Hospital and receive the latest medical care for children exposed to AIDS.

Danielle, a sibling to Michael, was the last child to join this forever family. Danielle experienced emotional abuse and neglect throughout her life. She was born addicted to methadone. Langbehn noted that her biological mother used heroin, cocaine, and alcohol. Danielle has developmental delays, ADHD, and oppositional defiance disorder (ODD).



Members of Janice Langbehn's "forever home" are (from left) Katie, Michael, Danielle, and David

Danielle's adoption was completed when she was five and a half. She is now seven and a half.

While Katie doesn't face the same challenges as her siblings, she works to accept her brothers' and sister's disabilities without question. "That's how our family is — tolerance is discussed and expected. We teach our children that they will always encounter others who look, act, speak or have different beliefs than our family and we must respect that," said Langbehn.

They have had complete support from Pond's parents who live on the East Coast. "Lisa's mom loves to shop for these kids."

Each summer Pond and the kids go to her family's home on Cape Cod for a month.

The children are not the only ones facing challenges in the family. Several years ago Langbehn was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Langbehn continues to work full time. Pond quit her full time job as a social worker with the state to stay home with the children because of their complex needs.

They have never regretted that decision because, as Langbehn said, "Lisa is about to be the Girl Scout troop leader for Danielle, volunteer in Katie and David's classrooms, and take Michael to his karate lessons."

"Foster parenting or even adoption is not for every family," she said, "but the 'system' — meaning children services — was critical in our family's story being a success. We are very thankful for our adoption support worker, plus Michael's social worker who took a chance on us, as well as placement workers who respected the skills we had to offer as foster parents."

When asked if they will take in any more children, Langbehn said, "How could you hope for a better family? We have two sibling groups, two boys, and two girls. How can you top that?"

Employee Recognition program refreshed

After being in place for many years, the DSHS Employee Recognition Program is undergoing a revitalization. Many elements of the current program remain in place, with a number of refinements and enhancements, according to Alice Liou, special assistant to the Secretary.

In March 2001, the *Star Catchers* team was chartered to recommend the framework and guidelines for an employee recognition program that encourages innovation in the pursuit of excellence. After six months of teamwork, the team developed a program based on the following recommendations:

- Provide choice of gifts for the Years of Service Award.
- Provide resources and examples for informal and immediate recognition.
- Create awards for formal recognition to acknowledge excellent customer service, diversity effort, individual performance, leadership, partnership, risk taking and team performance.
- Improve scoring methods to

support measurable and compatible evaluation processes.

- Develop a Web site where users can find complete information about the DSHS Employee Recognition Program, including nomination forms, references, sample templates, scoring matrixes, and informal recognition ideas.

Members of the DSHS Cabinet approved the proposal in October and charged the Human Resources Division with incorporating these improvements into the upcoming Employee Recognition Program, in which work performances from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2001 will be considered for recognition.

It's now time to nominate candidates for recognition. A packet of information has been sent to all staff. The nomination due dates this year are Jan. 15 for local recognition, Feb. 15 for regional recognition, and March 29 for state-level recognition. Detailed information can be found in the packet.

The new Award Nomination Form (DSHS 03-212) is on the DSHS Forms and

Records Management Web site at http://asd.dshs.wa.gov/forms/wordforms/03_212.doc. The Personnel Policy 527, Employee Recognition of Service Awards Program, is also available online at <http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/personnelpolicy/PP527.HTM>.

Other information about the DSHS Employee Recognition Program will soon be on the Human Resources Division Web site at <http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/ESD/> (scheduled to be posted by Jan. 2), which will include sections explaining Formal Employee Recognition, Informal Employee Recognition, Years of Service Awards, and Retirement Recognition.

Jodie Honeysett is the new coordinator for the DSHS Employee Recognition Program. If you have questions about this program, contact Honeysett at HoneyJM@dshs.wa.gov or (360) 664-5863. If you have questions or suggestions for the Employee Recognition Web site, contact Shirley Stirling at stirlisa@dshs.wa.gov or (360) 664-5877.